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BODY:

Statement of Jennifer C. Buck, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs Resources

Committee on House Armed Services Subcommittee on Total Force

March 19, 2003

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to providing you with information about recent deliberations on the appropriate mix of Active and Reserve forces to meet the Department's missions and responsibilities. I will emphasize the contributions that the National Guard and Reserve can make to the national defense.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Reserve components have been an integral part of every significant military operation. Reserve component support has increased from 1.4 million duty days in fiscal year (FY) 1989 to nearly 13 million duty days in FY 2001. The Guard and the Reserve will continue to play an important role in the future. There is considerable evidence, however, that the balance of capabilities in the Active and Reserve components today may not be the best for the future. Changes are needed in force mix, mission assignments, and in management systems in order to more effectively fulfill the mission of the Department of Defense.

The Department conducted a review of active and reserve force mix, directed by the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review which addressed how the contributions of the Guard and Reserve—in both new and traditional roles and missions—can enhance the capability of the Total Force. The following is a summary of these findings.

Transforming the Reserve Components

Two overarching themes have become the basis for our approach to how the Reserve components can transform to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing security environment and a new capabilities-based defense strategy. They are:

Rebalancing to Enhance Capabilities. The Military Services can expand the capabilities of the Total Force by rebalancing existing force structure and reassigning the missions of existing force structure to take advantage of the core competencies of both the Active and Reserve forces.

Creating Flexibility in Force Management. Current force management policies and systems make it difficult for the Services to operate in truly efficient and flexible ways. The Department must begin to manage the force in a way that is consistent with how it will be used in the future.

Many structure shortages can be addressed through a wide range of management actions, including changing planned deployment schedules, introducing innovative management practices, and making force structure changes. Changing the force mix, however, is the most costly action that the Department can take, with the longest lead time to achieve results.

Expanding Force Capability through Rebalancing

Rebalancing the existing force structure within current end strength can enhance force capabilities. The Services may realize greater agility and flexibility in the force by changing the allocations of capabilities between Active and Reserve components. Our review identified several areas for the Services to explore.

Resolving Constraints and Imbalances

Demands on the military are creating constraints and imbalances in force capabilities that can lead to shortages in some areas. For inherently military skills that are needed on a full-time or continuing basis, such as Air Force security forces, additional active duty manpower is needed, and the Air Force is addressing ways to move resources to cover these requirements. If these military skills are needed intermittently or for surge requirements, such as linguists, then a larger Reserve component rotational pool should be created. If the shortages are in civilian acquired skills, such as information technology specialists, that are hard to develop and retain in the Active force, the Department should increase the rotational pool in the Reserve components and use innovation in the management of that population to maximize their retention and utilization.

The FY 04 Budget contains some force structure changes that will help to reduce current force imbalances. The Army, for example, has requested an increase of one active Civil Affairs company, an active Psychological Operations company, and one Army Special Operations MH-47 aviation battalion, and an Army Reserve Civil Affairs battalion. The Navy is creating an active unit within the Navy Coastal Warfare community to relieve the personnel tempo requirements placed on reserve units. The Marine Corps will convert two Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison companies from reserve to active to address shortfalls in capabilities required early in deployments. To address its shortage of security forces, the Air Force has expanded its use of technology, increased the number of active security forces, and, thanks to the recent legislative change, contracted for civilian guard support. Commencing in FY 03, The Air Force also stood up a truly blended AC/RC unit at Robbins Air Force Base to perform the Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System mission. The FY 04 budget proposes to fund three new C-17 associate units in the Air Force Reserve, and to expand the F-16 fighter associate program into the maintenance shops.

Meeting Requirements for Emerging Missions

The United States faces a wide range of emerging missions that present tremendous challenges to the Department of Defense. They include homeland security, high-technology mission areas, and experimentation.

Defense of the Homeland. While often associated exclusively with the Reserve components, defense of the homeland is a Total Force mission. While major combat operations remain the basis for building force structure, the future Total Force will have to be more flexible and agile to respond to homeland defense requirements as well. For example, the Air National Guard has historically been responsible in the air defense or air sovereignty mission. When increased threat levels require a surge in higher operational tempo, the Air Guard could share the load with other Service or component aviation units—both active and reserve. A "rotational watch" construct, drawing from assets from the Active and Reserve components, could help preserve capabilities to meet both homeland security and other continuing military operations.

High Technology Operations. The Reserve components enhance DoD's access to expertise for rapidly expanding high-technology capabilities and other unique private sector functions, such as information operations. Further, new technological advances have increased the type and number of functions that can be conducted at sites far away from the battlefield. "Reachback" support from the continental United States enhances the ability of both Active and Reserve components to contribute to overseas operations. The FY 04 budget proposes funding to continue the Joint Reserve Virtual Information Operations program, in which reservists support combatant commanders' requirements at three U.S. based locations.

Experimentation. The predictability, tempo, and timing of experiments make them well suited for a more focused role for Reserve components, alleviates the burden on Active component forces, and reduces the cancellation risks which may occur if active units need to be diverted for quick-response contingencies.

Changing Priorities for Traditional Missions

While new and emerging missions tend to receive a great deal of attention in the planning process, the Department must continue to be prepared to carry out traditional missions. These include major combat operations, small scale contingencies, and forward presence. The new defense strategy may require a new approach to meeting these missions, including changes to the role and contribution of the Reserve components. Reconfiguring heavy combat forces in the Army, for example to more flexible, multi-purpose units, and utilizing lower levels of combat and combat support roundout integration would simplify peacetime training requirements, and reduce the mobilization timelines. Using innovative approaches to create or expand the use of multi-component units will allow the Services to gain greater flexibility in managing operational and personnel tempo, capitalize on the strengths and capabilities of each component to sustain a larger, more experienced pool of personnel to meet surge or wartime tasks.

Sharing the responsibilities for small scale contingencies, the Active Forces would shoulder most of the responsibility for the rapid-response phase and the reserves would take on responsibility for follow-on phases, as the predictability of the operation increases. The Reserve components have participated in operational missions such as Northern and Southern Watch, Multinational Forward Observers in the Sinai Peninsula, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Through these experiences, the Guard and Reserve have proven that they are a cost-effective means to sustain military capability that better manages the operational tempo of the Total Force and preserves force readiness for rapid response operations. Their role in future overseas presence operations, utilizing intermittent or rotational voluntary tours is a viable option.

Creating Flexibility in Force Management

While the Reserve components have become a significant element of the Total Force, there is a limit to how much the reserves can be asked to do, particularly through involuntary mobilizations. They are part-time citizen soldiers who must balance their duty to country with responsibilities to civilian careers. As a result, care must be taken in the frequency of involuntary reserve call-ups. Changing the force mix is only one aspect of the actions that the Department needs to take. Creating a more flexible force management system will give the Department the opportunity to utilize the capabilities in the Guard and Reserve through a "Continuum of Service" which matches the availability of the service member with the operational requirements of the Department. Some of the necessary changes are legislative, and the Department's FY 04 Omnibus Legislative package contains the initial batch of these requests. The preponderance of the changes, however, are policy related. Some relate to the need to streamline the mobilization process to improve responsiveness. Others require the introduction of innovative management techniques to enhance volunteerism to provide trained, ready individual reservists and crews who can respond immediately without requiring mobilization, and expanding the use of reachback to reduce the footprint in theater through virtual connectivity to home station locations. And finally, the Department needs to overhaul and simplify its duty statuses and access rules, and develop a sliding scale of benefits and entitlements that are consistent for all members and are commensurate with levels of participation.

Again, thank you very much for this opportunity to testify. I stand ready to respond to your questions.

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